



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

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Baucus Applauds Decision to Begin Thailand FTA Negotiations

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) U.S. Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.), Ranking Member of the Senate Finance Committee, today issued the following statement about the launch of free trade agreement ("FTA") negotiations with Thailand:

"I am pleased the United States will begin negotiating a free trade agreement with Thailand, as I urged when the President began his Asia trip last week. Thailand is already a large U.S. trading partner and this is a step I have long supported. American farmers, workers, and businesses have a lot to gain in a good agreement with that country.

Over the past year, I've spoken with U.S. business and agriculture representatives to learn about their priorities for free trade agreements. They have all told me that we must focus on large markets where U.S. businesses have the best opportunities to make commercial gains.

Thailand fits this description well. For example, Thailand's average tariff rate on agricultural goods is about thirty-five percent. Lowering these agricultural tariffs will be a real boon to our farmers and ranchers and should be a prime goal for the United States in the negotiations.

I look forward to working with the Administration and my colleagues in Congress as the free trade agreement negotiations with Thailand progress."

Baucus has long been a vocal supporter of launching FTA negotiations with Thailand. In June, he and Representative Cal Dooley urged the Administration to consider trade negotiations with Thailand and other large economies. Baucus also urged an FTA with Thailand in a July speech on Asia trade policy. And last week, Baucus and Senator Gordon Smith (R-Ore.) sent a letter signed by eight other Senators, including key members of the Senate Finance Committee, asking the President to announce the U.S. intention to negotiate an FTA with Thailand at the APEC summit in Bangkok.

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